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**ASIAN AMERICANS:
A QUALITY MARKET FOR FORCE XXI**

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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The futuristic Army envisioned in the Force XXI concept will depend on high quality personnel for success. As the Army evolves into a technologically sophisticated and information intensive force, it will find itself in increasingly stiff competition with the civilian sector for well-educated, self-motivated and capable personnel to fill its ranks. With its record of social achievements along with its projected growth, the U.S. Asian American population represents a potential high quality market whose youth demonstrate traits and attributes relevant and desirable in a high technology workplace. This study looks at Asian American achievement, representation in the military, propensity to enlist, and concludes with recommendations for increasing Asian American representation in the Army.

In this paper I conduct an analysis of the United States' Asian American community to assess its potential as a source of high quality recruits for the U.S. Army's Force XXI, the high technology Army of the future converging on the year 2010. I examine Asian American demographics, culture, ethics, values, religion, and education, focusing on possible links between culture and achievement as well as how culture affects the propensity of Asian Americans to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces.

I will propose and attempt to verify that the U.S. Asian American community is an especially unique minority whose cultural influences appear to endow its youth with traits and attributes essential to a high technology workplace such as that envisioned for the Force XXI warrior. Evidence for this proposal comes from a host of factual and anecdotal information demonstrating that Asian Americans are keenly interested in and hold in high esteem the disciplines of mathematics, engineering, information science, analysis, computer science, and other physical and "hard" sciences, all disciplines especially relevant to the high technology Army projected for the 21st century. Further, Asian Americans demonstrate, and are known for dedication and commitment to education, discipline, hard work, and drive to excel, all highly desirable characteristics for soldiering. The above factors, combined with the phenomenal past and projected growth of the Asian American community, justify a closer examination of Asian Americans as a Force XXI recruiting market.

Additionally, I will attempt to discern why Asian Americans are underrepresented in today's Army when compared to the percentage of the total U.S. population they comprise and how they compare to other minorities in the Army. I will conclude with recommendations on possible incentives, advertising and special considerations in recruiting Asian Americans, and implications for the Army in targeting specific recruiting pools.

It is important to point out that my research on this subject in no way suggests that one minority group is superior to, or more desirable than any other minority group, or that the U.S. Army should show bias or preference toward one group at the expense of another. Nor does this paper endorse eugenics or genetic superiority theories, or theories linking ethnicity and cognitive ability like that presented in a recent controversial book entitled *The Bell Curve* in which the authors support the heritability and predictability of intelligence by ethnicity. In that book in fact, the authors state that, "East Asians, whether in America or in Asia, typically earn higher scores on intelligence and achievement tests than white Americans."¹ This paper seeks to explain Asian American achievement through cultural influences rather than genetics and, focuses on the extant pool of apparently quality youth in the Asian American community and their potential for service in Force XXI. The issue of genetic predisposition and racial character is a controversial and highly contested concept that is not relevant to the Army's recruiting practices and goals.

In the 11 October 1995 edition of *USA Today*, President Clinton and Vice President Gore announced a new national mission in an editorial entitled, "Clinton, Gore call for 21st century workforce." Calling on corporate America, parents, teachers and others, the president declared that, "By the year 2000, 60% of the new jobs in America will require advanced technological skills. only 20% of our workforce possesses these skills today." The president further cites the imperatives of the information age and concludes that, "As we enter the 21st century, every young person should enter the workforce technologically literate."²

The president's declaration was yet another response to the decade long decline in U.S. education and America's waning pre-eminence in technology and science. Finding technologically educated, qualified workers who will sustain and secure our high-tech future is a growing concern of business, industry, the government, and the military. The president's concept for a 21st century workforce closely mirrors the Army's vision of manpower for the future Army, Force XXI. It is not a new concept for the U.S. Army. Much has been written in the last few years conceptualizing the requirements for soldiering in the future and on how the Army will recruit and retain the special people needed to man Force XXI.

So what kind of person does the Army envision as the Force XXI warrior? While job requirement specifics are still evolving, it is generally agreed that as a baseline aptitude, the Force XXI

soldier will have to confront special challenges and tasks driven by information and the increasingly fast-paced, complex nature of war. Research psychologists and behavioral scientists at the Army Research Institute (ARI) believe the most important factor for the successful future soldier will be high cognitive ability: being able to absorb, comprehend, analyze and synthesize volumes of information. "There will be more information to be processed" and "quick judgements about this information will be needed" according to one ARI psychologist.³

While mental talents will be essential for the future soldier, ARI's Force XXI warrior model also includes strong personal values such as self-confidence, initiative, self-sufficiency and especially, personal integrity. ARI researchers believe that "the emphasis on personal integrity is consistent with expectations that the future Army will be less centralized and will allow greater personal autonomy,...with autonomy comes responsibility."⁴

Other notions for future warriors are inspired by the information-based war concept. The Tofflers refer to a need for "niche warriors," "Software Soldiers," and "Ph.D.s with Rucksacks" to fight highly specialized information-intensive battles using Third Wave technologies.⁵ Some have even postulated an "Information Corps or Force" peculiar to the information realm, analogous to an Air Force for the air and a Navy for the sea, we would have a separate force to gain "information superiority" as a precursor to combat.⁶ These "I

Corps" personnel would be experts in the Global Information Infrastructure, multinational omnibus computer connectivity, data fusion, correlation, analysis, synthesis, logic, decision-making, intelligence, communications law, cryptography, and many other computer, signal, and space disciplines.

While some descriptions of the potential Force XXI warrior may be somewhat overstated, the general idea that future soldiers will have to be high quality soldiers, both mentally and ethically, can not be minimized. This portends profound consequences for Army recruiters who will face greater and greater competition from the private sector as business and industry compete for the best and the brightest to fill their own increasingly high-tech ranks. Research shows that the Army's primary recruiting market of 18-20 year olds is at a low point, but will gradually increase over the next 15 years; however, the size of that market is expected to stagnate at a time when civilian demand for quality people will be at its highest.⁷ This will put the Army and the other services in direct competition with the private sector for quality youth. In the heat of such competition, some even speculate that industry would resort to their own type of "GI Bill" in an attempt to thwart the military services' most effective weapon in the fight for quality people.⁸ This fierce competition for quality people will be propelled by the increasing value of intelligence in the marketplace. Since the 1950s, wages for people in jobs requiring the highest cognitive ability have risen dramatically, sharply pulling away

from the general workforce.⁹ This trend will continue as a consequence of an increasingly technological and complex world with its bold new economics. As one author puts it, "The more complex a society becomes, the more valuable are the people who are especially good at dealing with complexity."¹⁰

Other social trends will further complicate the quest for quality youth. Today's youth come from parents who have had the highest divorce rate in U.S. history and increasing numbers of these youth are growing up in fatherless families as a result of divorce or illegitimacy. According to Patricia Shields, a professor at Southwest Texas State University, "Fatherless children are more prone to economic, academic, achievement, behavioral, emotional and health problems than children from two parent families." "Because fatherlessness breeds a variety of problems, this trend has negative implications for the trainability, motivation and performance of Force XXI soldiers."¹¹ The trend is especially significant for minorities. According to 1993 U.S. census data for children under age 18, only 36 percent of Black children and 64 percent of Hispanic children lived with both parents; for whites it was 77 percent.¹²

In acknowledging the important task ahead for Army recruiters, former Army Chief of Staff, General Gordon Sullivan, asked key leaders at a recent Force XXI manpower conference what strategies the Army should employ if there is going to be a mismatch between supply and demand for quality youth.¹³ Part of any strategy will have to be closer examination of emerging,

quality markets and implications these markets hold for the Army as it competes for quality personnel. One such market is the community of Asian Americans in the U.S. With its past, present and projected growth and its remarkable record of achievements, a study of the U.S. Asian American community as a potential quality recruiting pool is certainly merited.

At this point, it is appropriate to define Asian American. Asian Americans are diverse ethnically, nationally, religiously and linguistically. Yet, as with Hispanic Americans, for the purposes of statistical and administrative convenience, the U.S. government has lumped all peoples of geographic Asian origin into a single panethnic grouping referred to as Asian American. In fact, in demographics jargon the group is commonly referred to as Asian American/Pacific Islanders. Included in this group are as many as seventeen subgroups of peoples ranging from Asian Indians, Hmong, Filipinos, Pacific Islanders to Vietnamese. Based on population figures, the largest percentage of Asian Americans are Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, Asian Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Thai; the remainder are ethnic groups that, while included in the group, are not as statistically significant.

There has been a rapidly growing body of evidence suggesting that Asian Americans are a "model minority" who promote and demonstrate admirable social values and high achievement. The term, "model minority" was first used in 1966 by sociologist, William Petersen, writing about how Japanese Americans had, "gone

from pariah to paragon," in just twenty years after WWII. By 1982, the U.S. media had picked up on Asian American successes, and brought the issue to light in various media such as a 1982 edition of *Newsweek* which carried a favorable front cover titled "Asian Americans: A Model Minority."¹⁴ This stereotype, born out of America's realization that large numbers of Asian Americans were compiling quite remarkable achievements in a variety of areas, prompted numerous surveys, studies, and statistics detailing these achievements.

What follows is just a sampling of some facts and figures that highlight educational, and social achievements as well as certain behavioral characteristics related to Asian Americans; additional facts and figures are in appendix 1:

- From 1979 to 1989 college degrees conferred on Asian Americans increased 148% for bachelor's, 95% for master's and 46% for doctorates compared to 11%, 3%, and 10% increases respectively for all other groups; Asian Americans also had the highest percentage of Ph.D.s among the nation's minorities.¹⁵
- In 1986, while only 2.1% of the U.S. population, Asian Americans constituted 8% of undergraduates and 11% of freshmen at Harvard, and 19% of undergraduates and 21% of freshmen at MIT; in California, they were 25% of undergraduates at University of California at Berkeley, more than a third of undergraduates at University of California, Irvine, and today make up 40% of the student body at University of California, Los Angeles.¹⁶ In 1992, at 3.7% of the population, Asian Americans accounted for 5% of total enrollments at institutions of higher learning.¹⁷
- In the 1983 Westinghouse Science Talent Search, the nation's most honored science award for high school students, the winner was a 16 year old Taiwan-born immigrant, and of the 40 finalists nationwide, 30% (12) were Asian American, 9 of whom were immigrants. In Westinghouse's 1986 competition, the top five prizes went to Asian Americans.¹⁸
- In the 1980 census, male high school graduation rates for the six largest Asian American ethnic groups was higher than the white male rate of 69%; Koreans were the highest at 90%. In

rates for completing four or more years of college, male Chinese and Korean Asian Americans completed at a rate double that for white males; the Asian Indian completion rate was three times that of white males.¹⁹

- o In 1988, Asian American high school students had the lowest dropout rate of any group in the nation.²⁰
- o In 1992, while just 3% of the U.S. population, Asian Americans constituted 8% of all Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) takers and scored a math portion mean of 532 compared to 491 for whites, 385 for Blacks, and 425 for Hispanics.²¹ On the math portion, Asian Americans have been scoring about 30 points higher than any other group every year since 1975; in fact, they are the only group that has scored an average above 500 every year since 1975. However, their verbal portion mean scores have traditionally been lower, for example, their verbal mean in 1992 was 413 compared to 442 for whites, 352 for Blacks and 372 for Hispanics.²² Their SAT scores reflect a trend of Asian American academic concentration in quantitative fields with less emphasis on arts and social sciences.
- o In a 1992 nationwide survey of high school seniors, Asian Americans had a higher percentage of membership in academic clubs than any other group.²³
- o From 1970 to 1989, by a large margin, Asian Americans had the lowest out-of-wedlock birth rate of all racial and ethnic groups in the nation. For the same period, they also had the lowest birth rate to mothers under the age of 18.²⁴
- o A 1990 survey revealed that out of all racial and ethnic groups, Asian Americans had the highest percentage living in married couple families.²⁵
- o A 1993 survey revealed that 30.5% of all Asian Americans own personal computers, compared to 19.8% for Blacks and 9.6% for Hispanics.²⁶
- o As early as 1980, surveys indicated that 84% of Asian American high school students planned to continue education after high school and 61% expected to attend a 4 year college; this was compared to 58% and 38% respectively for whites. Their college expectations remained high in 1982 and 1992 when 82% and 83% respectively, planned college after high school, still higher than any other group. Accordingly, Asian American high school seniors in 1982 and 1992 had the highest percentage of participation in college preparatory courses of any other group.²⁷
- o In 1983-85 surveys, 7 out of 10 college-bound Asian Americans intended to major in engineering, computer and

information sciences, health sciences, business and commerce; they were also twice as likely as whites and three times as likely as Blacks and Hispanics to major in engineering.²⁸

Along with factual evidence, there is persistent anecdotal evidence about Asian Americans and their reputation for hard work and achievement. In a recent conversation with the 7th and 8th grade children of family friends, they recounted how math competition in their schools was always won by a Vietnamese boy in one school and a Chinese boy in another. One also hears frequently about Asian American college students being criticized by other races for "curve busting" on grading scales and for raising the level of competition for jobs in such fields as math, science and engineering. The University of California-Berkeley student body president once said that some students say if they see too many Asians in a class, they drop the class because they know the grading curve will be too high. These kinds of tales seem to be common and certainly fuel the "model minority" perception of Asian Americans.²⁹

In addition to noteworthy achievements in education, society, and the workplace, a more fundamental imperative for considering Asian Americans as a recruiting market is simply their projected growth. Currently, Asian Americans are the fastest growing minority in the U.S. recording a 107.8 percent increase in population between 1980 and 1990; Vietnamese, Koreans and Asian Indians were the fastest growing of the subgroups. By comparison, Black and Hispanic populations grew at 13.2 and 53 percent respectively for the same period.³⁰ In 1990, 7.3 million

Asian Americans made up 2.9 percent of the U.S. population compared to 9 percent for Hispanics and 12.1 percent for Blacks. In 1995, the Census Bureau recorded 9.7 million Asian Americans accounting for 3.7 percent of the U.S. population with projections that by the year 2020, they will comprise 8.1 percent of the population at 22 million strong.³¹

Certainly the U.S. Asian American population would be much larger today had the U.S. not enacted past discriminatory naturalization and immigration legislation that severely curtailed Asian American growth. Citizenship statutes were changed in 1870 to exclude Asians specifically from naturalization while granting those rights to persons of African and European descent. This was followed closely by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which suspended Chinese immigration, and later the Immigration Act of 1924 broadened the immigration ban to include anyone not eligible for naturalized citizenship, which of course included all Asians; all the while, European immigrants were streaming into the U.S. under large quotas.³² There was no relief for Asians until passage of the McLarran-Walter Act in 1952 which eliminated race as a basis to bar immigration and naturalization.³³ Asian immigration accelerated when the Immigration Act of 1965 repealed the national origins quota system and established hemispheric quotas instead.³⁴

World events also played an important role in Asian American population growth. The fall of Saigon in 1975, the Southeast Asian exodus of the 80s and what has been called the "Asian Brain

"Drain" of the 70s and 80s caused by a third world that trained more professionals than they could employ, all provided boosts in their U.S. population.³⁵ There is also speculation that the transfer of Hong Kong to China in 1997 will generate a microburst in immigration to the U.S. in 1996 and 1997.

Authors offer up various theories on what influences and forces are behind the success and achievement of Asian Americans. The most common explanation credits a cultural values system evolved from and sustained by neo-confucian and Asian religious principles that are consistently reinforced in the household.

Responsibility, discipline, hard work, perseverance, a strong sense of family, self-reliance and a reverence for education are some of the most frequently used descriptors for Asian Americans. These very values, prevalent in shaping everyday life in Asian American families, are often decried as lacking in our own society today with the familiar protest, "we need to regain those traditional, small town American values of the past." A Vietnamese refugee who was resettled near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in 1965, vividly captured this idea recounting his impressions that, "...the values of the small community in America are shared in many ways by the Vietnamese: family, closeness, thrift and hard work."³⁶ Ironically, some Americans can not make the connection. A shrimper and fourth generation Texan interviewed about competition from Vietnamese-American shrimpers, labeled the Vietnamese-American work style as un-American; when asked to explain, he said, "No American works

16 hours a day, such behavior is un-American."!³⁷

Asian religions and social concepts seem to provide a philosophical basis for everyday life of Asian Americans. Concepts such as beliefs in inner strength and endurance as embodied in the Vietnamese "Tanh Can Cu": a willingness to do things even when the hard way is the only possible way, and "Tan Hien Hoc": the love of knowledge and learning in general.³⁸ Other concepts are common such as the primacy of family and promoting and protecting your family as one's highest imperative and obligation. Stoicism in hardship, a view that complaining suggests a lack of character, and that with hard work, one can achieve anything, are all common themes.

The most universal ethic among Asian Americans seems to be the value placed on higher education. In Vietnamese society, scholars rank the highest in the social class system and intellectuals are honored and revered; education is a family affair with the father playing a major role. One author notes, in the Vietnamese family, "...tutoring children is a father's personal responsibility..."; "...the father's role is to monitor and control and help the kids keep focus."³⁹ Additionally, elder brothers and sisters are expected to set a good example for their siblings when it comes to education, "Good education honors the whole family" comments that same author.⁴⁰ Asian Americans view education as an investment for the future that is well worth the hardship and sacrifice to obtain. They see education as the vehicle for success and prosperity, and as the path for

minorities to follow in order to achieve self-sufficiency and autonomy in America. From an early age, Asian American parents instill in their children the education ethic and expectations for higher learning. Accordingly, their children feel an obligation to do well to foster respect for family and community. In interviews with Asian American valedictorians and ranking students in Washington, D.C. high schools, one author noted comments from a student that seemed a common theme from all, "We know we are a minority in this country and we have to do better than other Americans, that's the only way we'll get ahead."⁴¹

Relevant to this issue is the question of whether Asian American values and ethics will endure as succeeding generations assimilate, acculturate and integrate into American society. Only time will tell; however, there are positive indicators. In one recent survey of young Japanese American college students, they indicated overwhelmingly that they still believed in such values as hard work, good education, family, community solidarity and perseverance, as passed down to them by previous generations.⁴²

In addition to Asian American achievements and projected growth, there is another more compelling reason for America's Army to target Asian American youth for Force XXI. Because it is "America's" Army, it should be a cross-section of American society, one that portrays, at a minimum, a balanced representation of ethnicity and race in America. Army recruiting strategy should keep pace with the changing face of America as

demographic projections for 2015 and beyond predict significant racial and ethnic growth. In the future, large organizations will find themselves increasingly engaged in "diversity management" to ensure balance and harmony in their personnel practices; as it has done for most of its history, the Army should set the standard in this effort.

In the context of this paper, appropriate minority representation refers to percentages in the military as compared to percentages in the total U.S. population, and assumes that if the two correspond, then representation is at appropriate levels. Currently, Asian Americans are considerably underrepresented in the U.S. Army as compared to their percentage of the total population. In 1994, Asian Americans, at 3.5 percent of the population, made up only 2 percent of the Army. Within all of Department of Defense (DoD) in 1994, they accounted for 2.7 percent with a low of 1.5 percent in the Marines to a high of 4.7 percent in the Navy. Interestingly, these figures have been a trend since 1976 when Asian Americans were 2 percent of the Army and 2.5 percent of DoD but oddly, were less than 2 percent of the U.S. population; in 1987, they were 1.5 percent of the Army and 2.2 percent of DoD, but 2.5 percent of the population.⁴³ So, while their U.S. population growth has more than doubled since 1976, their numbers in the military have not risen accordingly, this was basically the trend in all the services since 1976.⁴⁴

Additionally, within Asian Americans in the Army, subgroup representation is unbalanced. For example, in 1993 there were

4,356 Filipino and Pacific Islander American enlisted soldiers, but only a total of 1,808 Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese American enlisted combined.⁴⁵

Another way to contrast Asian American representation in the Army is to look at the percentages of other minorities in the Army. Blacks, who comprised 12.5 percent of the U.S. population in 1994, accounted for 30.3 percent of the Army's enlisted force in 1994; within the female enlisted ranks, 48.1 percent were Black. Hispanics, at 10 percent of the U.S. population in 1994, were also underrepresented in the Army at 5.4 percent of enlisted in 1994.⁴⁶ Within the officer and warrant ranks, all minorities were underrepresented except for Black females. So, when compared to Black overrepresentation, the low numbers of Asian Americans, as well as Hispanics, is even more pronounced.

Why don't Asian Americans join the Army in larger numbers? Just as with Blacks and Hispanics, a multitude of complex social factors determine and influence Asian American representation in the Army. Certainly language and immigrant status impact the ability of the newly arrived generations to join the Army. But, what about second, third and fourth generation Asian Americans who have basically assimilated and acculturated? Ironically, some of those admirable values and ethics that seem to account for much of their achievements, probably play a role in a reduced propensity to serve in the military. The dominance of family and the importance placed on promoting and protecting family first and foremost surely influences the decision to join the Army and

leave home. Also, the Army may not be seen as a job that fulfills the imperative to bring respect and honor to one's family. A Korean American Army recruiter in the Los Angeles Recruiting Battalion told me that many Korean parents view the Army as lower class employment, an outdated perspective they hold because of their knowledge of Korea's draft army with its low pay and benefits.⁴⁷ Consent of parents and elders is a vital determinant in recruiting Asian American youth, and parents must be unequivocally convinced that military service will help their son or daughter succeed. If the Army's message is not getting through to the parents, many of whom still speak native languages, then simple communication is also a factor in reduced propensity.

Other practical factors such as expectations of childrens' involvement in the family business as well as high aspirations toward good paying jobs, college, and professional status could all dissuade a young, talented teen from considering Army employment. These are all powerful cultural influences that would tend to discourage youth from military service if it is not seen as a vehicle for achieving higher aims.

Another not so prosaic, but equally plausible explanation of low propensity may be tied to the long history of anti-Asian discrimination in America. Since the late 19th century there have been more than 600 pieces of anti-Asian legislation that limited or excluded Asian Americans from citizenship, land ownership, employment, intermarriage, legal rights and many other

aspects of American life.⁴⁸ The legacy of all this may be a cynicism about the paradox and hypocrisy of stated American ideals of equality and cultural plurality, contrasted against the harsh reality of less than total acceptance of Asians in America. A cynicism that manifests in, not a less patriotic Asian American community, but one that might be less willing to invest its human talent in a government that in the recent past put Asian Americans on the margins of society.

Evidence of social bias against Asian Americans is substantial: FDR's 1942 Executive Order 9066 removing all persons of Japanese ancestry from the west coast and incarcerating them in internment camps; an American media that has stereotyped the "evil Jap," "the yellow peril," and "commie gooks" as maniacal, fanatical and placing no value on human life; the use of the A-bomb on Japan; anti-miscegenation laws born out of a fear of "racial mongrelization"; segregated housing that gave rise to "chinatowns" and "little Tokyos"; the My Lai massacre; scapegoating Japan for America's economic problems like condemning Japanese real estate holdings in America while ignoring the far greater holdings of Europeans; and, incidents of Asian-bashing like the 1982 beating death of Chinese American student Vincent Chin in Detroit by two laid off auto workers who apologized in court saying, "...we're sorry, we thought he was Japanese," a case that outraged Asian Americans when the killers were given probation and small fines.⁴⁹

While nothing could be found directly linking prejudice toward Asian Americans with their propensity to military service, the issue of bias and discrimination against Asian Americans is a persistent theme in writings on Asian American identity and could certainly influence a decision on military service. Many Asian Americans are sensitive to perceptions of them as unassimilable, servile and inscrutable. For them, even though they live and act as Americans, they do not feel they are fully accepted as Americans, so many feel alienated and tend to keep to themselves and their community when it comes to work and career. As one expert on Asian American culture put it, "...populations remain ethnic when their ethnicity yields greater returns than other statuses available to them."⁵⁰ Therefore, joining the military and being displaced into greater society would not be an attractive choice for Asian Americans who feel they will never be given a fair shake outside of their own ethnic enclaves.

One of the best indicators of propensity and attitudes toward military service is DoD's annual "Youth Attitude Tracking Survey" (YATS). However, a senior YATS analyst at the U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) recounted that while YATS breaks out responses for Blacks and Hispanics, Asian Americans are not singled out and are subsumed within the total response. Since the Asian American survey sample is so statistically small, they are not considered a "projectable sample," one that would allow conclusions on Asian Americans to be "projected" nationally. Interestingly, when asked why she thought Asian Americans were

underrepresented in the Army, the YATS analyst replied that her perception was, "they all want to go to college." ⁵¹

Without the benefit of readily available survey data on Asian American attitudes toward military service, Army recruiters have to rely on less than objective anecdotal information about Asian Americans' attitudes toward military service. While not scientific, there does seem to be a consistency to anecdotal information one hears about Asian American youth. And until more formalized tools are available to assess propensity in Asian Americans, what is known is enough to develop a rudimentary strategy for targeting Asian American youth for enlistment.

The Army must ensure it is postured to take advantage of the coming expansion of the Asian American community. A long range strategy that is peculiar to Asian Americans will be required to access this quality market. It must be a strategy that affords strategic advantage through special actions tailored for and directed at the unique culture of the Asian American community.

Some might argue that the relatively small size of the Asian American community does not currently justify a substantial effort to target that market. However, there is tremendous future market potential, and growth projections indicate Asian Americans will soon become a major national resource. Actions taken now will position the Army for the future and begin the process of normalizing Asian American participation in military service. Short of a grand strategy , there are certain measures that could be taken now to help establish the framework for

future strategy while increasing current recruitment.

Due to their pervasive influence, we must work to ensure Asian American parents and elders understand how the Army benefits their youth. Many Asian parents are first generation immigrants, still speak their native language, and have very outdated, misplaced ideas about the military in general. The Korean American recruiter mentioned earlier, who incidentally is a very successful recruiter, told me that Korean American parents are pleasantly surprised when they finally learn all the Army can offer their children. He said he frequently has to make this clear by translating English language pamphlets and booklets known as recruiting publicity items (RPIs).⁵² Army recruiting has Spanish language RPIs but none in Asian languages. Asian language RPIs, with the message directed at the parents, would be highly beneficial in bridging the knowledge gap between first generation Asian Americans and their English speaking children, as well as aid non-Asian recruiters. Civilian direct-mail marketing research has validated this concept by showing that Asian Americans pay greater attention to advertising received in their own language. ⁵³

The Army also needs to get more Asian American recruiters into the field. According to the Los Angeles Battalion Commander and Command Sergeant Major (CSM), Asian American recruiters more quickly gain credibility and trust with Asian parents than do non-Asian recruiters, especially if they speak the language.⁵⁴ Additionally, Asian American recruiters are frequently called

upon to assist other battalion recruiters in making sales presentations to Asian parents; in a heavily Asian market, they are a valuable resource and will be needed in larger numbers in the coming years.

Next, we need to capitalize on the Asian American devotion to higher learning and expectations for college which is a dominant buying motive for Asian Americans. It is especially important that Asian American parents be made aware of the Army College Fund and how the Army can be their childrens' vehicle to higher learning. We should showcase and highlight programs that are particularly attractive to Asian Americans such as the Concurrent Admissions Program which the Los Angeles Battalion CSM says is the enlistment option for virtually every Asian American they enlist.⁵⁵ This program enrolls the new enlistee in a college which then assigns the enlistee an academic sponsor who will monitor and advise the soldier through their enlistment until they separate and begin college at that same school.

Next, systematic market research should be undertaken. Surveys, focus groups and ethnographic studies would provide greater insight into Asian American demographics, motivations and attitudes toward military service. Such work would help build a foundation of information that could be used to drive Army and DoD advertising and aid personnel management actions. Currently there is no special program underway within Army recruiting to analyze and define the Asian American recruiting challenge.⁵⁶

Lastly, Army advertising should be crafted to send a message to Asian Americans that tells them the Army is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural organization that has a place for everyone in American society, and that we recognize the contribution Asian Americans can make to the Army. Asian Americans need to know things like the Army now has its first Buddhist monk in our Chaplain Corps and that we are aware of the growing presence and influence of Asians in American society. This type of advertising would do much to mitigate perceptions of less than total acceptance of Asians in American society.

The corporate world has recognized the Asian American community's affluence and high levels of education and have been working for the last several years to exploit what they see as a very upscale market. Sears, AT&T, Prudential, Sprint, MCI, Seagrams, and many others have taken direct aim at Asian Americans and are developing baseline programs that will gain them market penetration as well as put them in an advantageous position for the long term.⁵⁷ Recently, General Mills ran a national level breakfast cereal TV ad featuring an Asian American couple with absolutely nondescript accents, sitting on the front porch eating cereal. This is the style of ad that the Army should be using, one which portrays Asian Americans as "mainstream" participants in society. Army recruiting did have a specific advertising campaign directed at Asian Americans, but it was cancelled in 1990 due to budget cuts and currently there is no advertising targeted specifically at Asian Americans.⁵⁸

Traditional family values, social responsibility, a desire to excel, strong work ethic, and a love of learning are all commonly heard descriptors of Asian Americans. It is irrelevant whether Asian American achievement is derived from IQ, selective emigration, family, or spiritual influences; what is relevant is they are here to stay and they represent a quality resource for the Army.

However, there are implications for the Army as it pursues quality markets such as the Asian Americans. As we become smaller and more selective in recruitment, taking in only the best and the brightest, will we become elitist and less representative of society in general, something other than America's Army? One author describes a future society characterized by "cognitive elite" or "cognitive stratification" brought on by the proliferating complexity of civilization. He states, "...modern societies identify the brightest youths with ever increasing efficiency and then guide them into fairly narrow educational and occupational channels leading to the development of a distinct stratum in the social hierarchy"; this is a social danger the Army will face in the future if we are too selective in our recruiting practices.⁵⁹

Additionally, there are race relations issues related to recruitment of Asian Americans because of their attractiveness as a "model minority." The term itself leads many to overlook the significant diversity and disparities within the Asian American

populace. Not all Asian American subgroups are equal in their level of success in America. Also, one author cautions that, "'model minority' suggests that Asian Americans are more adept than other people of color at "making it" in mainstream society. Like other stereotypes, this serves a social purpose--in this case, to make invidious comparisons with other people of color, blaming them, rather than the economic and sociopolitical barriers in American society, for their problems."⁶⁰

The Army's challenge is to develop a recruiting strategy for the future that not only satisfies Force XXI imperatives, but also sustains the Army's reputation as America's preeminent equal opportunity organization. As one of the country's most enduring and respected institutions, the Army has an obligation to the American people to ensure that America's Army reflects the incredible mosaic that we call the American identity.

APPENDIX 1

- o In a 1986 survey of San Francisco area high schools, Stanford professor, Sanford Dornbusch, found that, "Asian Americans consistently got better grades than other students regardless of their parents' level of education or their families' social and economic status," and he found that male Asian Americans on average do 11.7 hours of homework a week, compared to 8 hours for whites and 6.3 for blacks. Among girls, the numbers were 12.3 for Asian Americans, 8.6 for whites and 9.2 for blacks. Asian Americans also got the best figures for attendance and paying attention in class. "My bottomline is, there's no question these Asians are working a heck of a lot harder," said professor Dornbusch; his findings have been repeated in virtually all such studies.⁶¹
- o In a 1990 U.S. Department of Education nationwide assessment of tenth graders, Asian Americans outscored all other racial and ethnic groups in math, history, reading and science.⁶²
- o In a 1990 survey of 2,511 Asian American high school students in the Seattle area, when asked to what they attributed academic success, the majority said effort accounted for success more frequently than ability.⁶³
- o In a 1991 educational survey of Americans aged 25 years or older, Asian Americans were identified as the best educated of all races within that group by possessing the highest median number of school years completed with 38% possessing Bachelor's degrees or higher compared to 20% nationwide.⁶⁴
- o Except for American Indians, Asian Americans had the lowest rate of AIDS cases recorded in the U.S. from 1984 to 1991.⁶⁵
- o From 1980 to 1988, accounting for only 0.9% of all arrests nationwide, Asian Americans by far had the lowest crime rates of all racial and ethnic groups.⁶⁶
- o In a 1989 survey, Asian Americans had the nation's highest median annual household income at \$36.7K compared to \$31K for whites and \$19.8K for Blacks. In 1992, 35% of Asian American households had annual incomes of \$50K or more compared to 26% for white households and in 1994 the average Asian American family income was \$41.5K, 18% higher than the national average.⁶⁷
- o Businesses owned by Asian Americans increased from 83,000 in 1977 to 355,000 in 1987, a 328% increase.⁶⁸
- o A 1992 survey of 5,000 Asian Americans in California revealed that 82% were registered voters.⁶⁹

- o Current growth rate projections for the nation's labor market show that during the period 1976 to 2000, Asian Americans will have the highest percentage of growth of any other group.⁷⁰
- o From 1990 to 1992, out of all minorities, Asian Americans earned the highest percentage of bachelor's and master's degrees in computer and information sciences, engineering and engineering related technologies.⁷¹

ENDNOTES

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